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# Alabama → Roll the union on!

## Solidarity with Amazon organizing

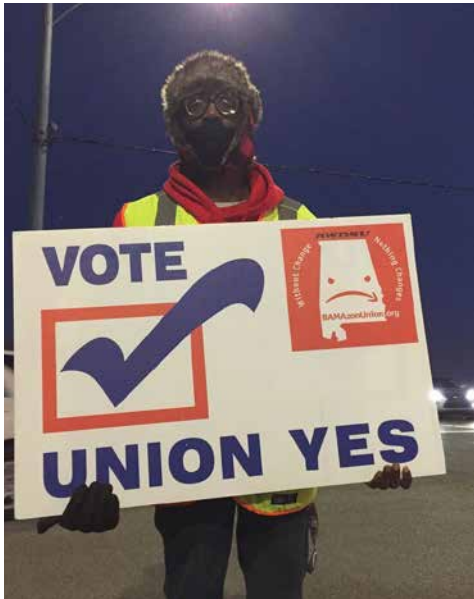
By Scott Williams

Solidarity with the struggle of 5,800+ Amazon workers in Bessemer, Ala., to unionize continues to grow, following the heroic lead of this majority Black workforce fighting for justice on the job.

On Feb. 12, the recently initiated Support Alabama Amazon Union campaign brought organizers in Bessemer and over 300 solidarity activists together, including Amazon workers from many locations. In a dynamic organizing meeting titled “How Can We Support the Bessemer Alabama

Workers’ Union,” leaders from unions and rank-and-file members, community supporters and even a U.S. Congress member discussed this critical struggle and made plans for the February 20 National Day of Solidarity with Bessemer Amazon workers.

Dominic Harris, President of United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 150’s Charlotte City Workers chapter, chaired this historic meeting along with Martha Grevatt, a Workers World managing editor, founding board member of Pride At Work and former executive board member of United Auto Workers Local 869.



Walking Powder Plant Road in Bessemer, Ala., at the approach to the Amazon warehouse where the majority Black workforce is seeking representation through the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

**How the union drive began**

The meeting opened with Josh Brewer, head organizer of the #BAmazon Union Campaign with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, who discussed how the campaign started and what it meant to workers in Bessemer.

“We started October 20th — well, we really started last summer. We were reached out to by a group of workers that had some concerns. Basically, there were some more generic concerns in the way of wages and benefits and treatment. But there were also some alarming concerns when we started talking about the ability to use the bathroom, when we started talking about being punished for having COVID, not having their COVID pay given to

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## Montgomery Bus Boycott, Bessemer, prisons Class struggle then and now

By Monica Moorehead

Fifty years after the end of the U.S. Civil War — and during the height of horrific lynchings of Black people in the Deep South by KKK terror — the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was founded in 1915 by Dr. Carter Woodson and Rev. Jesse E. Moorland to research and promote the individual contributions of people of African descent, both inside the U.S. and throughout the African diaspora.

The ASNLH launched a national “Negro History Week” in February 1926. Fifty years later in 1976, due to the influence of the Civil Rights Movement, this “Week” officially evolved into Black History Month in the U.S.

Even before 1926, the plight of Black people as an oppressed nation inside the U.S. caught the international attention of socialists and communists.

Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Russian Revolution, wrote in 1917: “In the United

States, [Black and Indigenous peoples] account for only 11.1%. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-65 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) in connection with the transition from the progressive, pre-monopoly capitalism of 1860-70 to the reactionary, monopoly capitalism (imperialism) of the new era, which in America was especially sharply etched out by the Spanish-American imperialist war of 1898 (i.e., a war between two robbers over the division of the booty).” (“Statistics and Sociology,” [tinyurl.com/3eavxy5f](https://tinyurl.com/3eavxy5f))

The great Vietnamese anti-colonial leader against U.S. and French imperialism, Ho Chi Minh, stated in his essay on “Lynching” in 1924, “It is well known that the Black race is the most oppressed and most exploited of the human family.” (La Correspondence

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FEB 20

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

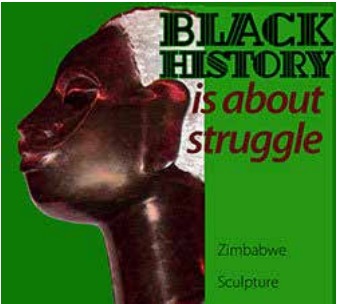
Join the campaign to support Amazon workers in Bessemer, AL with a solidarity action in YOUR CITY!

EVERY WORKER HAS THE RIGHT TO A UNION

SIGN THE PETITION [supportamazonworkers.org](https://supportamazonworkers.org)

Beginning Feb. 8 and ending March 29, approximately 6,000 Amazon warehouse workers in Bessemer, Ala., are voting by mail on whether to be represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). The Southern Workers Assembly has called a national day of solidarity with this historic union drive for Feb. 20. Demonstrations are happening around the country in over 40 cities, including: Birmingham, Ala.; Los Angeles, Oakland, Richmond, San Francisco and San Luis Obispo, Calif.; New Haven, Conn.; Pensacola, Fla.; Elmwood and New Orleans, La.; Atlanta; Baltimore; Boston; Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jackson, Miss.; Brooklyn, Buffalo and New York; Durham, Raleigh, Charlotte and Kennerlyville, N.C.; Cleveland; Troutdale, Ore.; Philadelphia; Charleston and Columbia, S.C.; Houston and San Antonio; Salt Lake City; Clear Brook and Chesapeake, Va.; Seattle; Ashland, Wis. — and your town! To find an action in your area, or to organize and list your own action, visit [SupportAmazonWorkers.org](https://SupportAmazonWorkers.org).

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- 'Free Mumia, all political prisoners!'
- Free Leonard Peltier!





# Oregon care workers dare to strike

By Workers World Portland bureau

In Springfield, Ore., essential health workers at The Rawlin at Riverbend Memory Care facility have set a Feb. 16 strike deadline to demand union recognition in order to improve staffing, training and turnover—and save residents’ lives. They are leading the way for workers throughout their community and the whole state.

With not enough trained staff to care for occupants appropriately, The Rawlin had 21 residents die in the last eight weeks, including six from COVID-19. And patients are dying from other conditions like sepsis from bed sores or urinary tract infections, which are preventable if treated in time. But inexperienced temp workers are unable to recognize the symptoms. With understaffing, patients are left too long in soiled clothing with few showers. Families are seeing their loved ones dying in degrading and horrendous conditions.

The Rawlin Med Tech Summer Trosko announced the strike on YouTube: “We are done watching our residents and each other suffer from the effects of critical understaffing, extreme turnover due to low wages and traumatizing working conditions at The Rawlin. It’s breaking my heart. It’s so hard to go to work every day knowing people are dying, and there is nothing I can do about it. That’s why we are forming a union, asking for change.” (tinyurl.com/1gsd5lwp)

The workers announced that 85% of their unit have signed cards and a petition demanding union recognition. (tinyurl.com/y6hb4okz) Onelife, the company that owns The Rawlin, refuses to recognize their decision to unionize with Service Employees Union (SEIU).

“So,” Trosko announced, “today we have made the difficult decision to send a 10-day strike notice. We are demanding immediate recognition of our union and that The Rawlin add an extra staff person to every shift for worker and resident safety right now.”

Onelife received \$260,858 in COVID relief funding.



Oregon essential care workers, Feb. 5.

PHOTO: SEIU 5035

According to SEIU, the money has not been used to improve facility conditions. The Rawlin workers make \$12.40 an hour, while owners Zach and Greg Falk live in luxury, with the latter paying cash in 2020 for a \$6.5 million mansion in Arizona.

On Feb. 13 over 50 community members and leaders attended a zoom meeting led by Bob Bussel, labor research professor at University of Oregon, where people volunteered to donate food and organize picket line shifts. Bussel said that COVID has shined a light on the deficiencies in health care, and The Rawlin workers and residents deserve respect.

In the zoom meeting, Hemes Ochoa, Rawlin medical technician, said conditions at the facility are “out of control.” A Dec. 10 COVID outbreak infected 47 residents and many workers including Ochoa. He said management harasses workers, follows them around and monitors their social media. Instead of increasing staff wages, bosses are hiring union-busting companies.

Leonard Stoehr, Springfield City Councilor and Teamsters 206 member, said he’s joining the picket line to recognize the union, and that this is not just a matter of The Rawlin, but a statewide issue. He affirmed he has a lot of respect for the very brave move by The Rawlin workers, putting themselves out front in the fight. □



## Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it’s the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth

and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people’s movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you’re interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

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# Electric vehicles and the UAW

## Fight for a shorter work week!

By Martha Grevatt

General Motors CEO Mary Barra raised more than a few eyebrows Jan. 28, when she announced GM would have an all-electric product line by 2035. This planned phaseout of fossil fuel-burning vehicles represents a serious departure from four years ago, when GM joined the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers in calling on President-elect Donald Trump to scale back President Barack Obama's fuel economy targets.

Why the about-face? It's not like GM is a conscientious company, although CEO Barra won't turn down an opportunity to boost its green reputation.

"When it comes to global automakers' electric vehicle plans, all roads lead back to Beijing," said Michael Dunne, a former president of G.M.'s Indonesia operations. The world's shift to electric cars "is based on the Chinese technological road map," added Yunshi Wang, director of the China Center for Energy and Transportation at University of California, Davis. (NY Times, Jan. 29)

Volkswagen and GM, the largest and fifth-largest car companies, sell more vehicles in China — where all-electric vehicles are fast becoming the norm — than in their home markets.

But the question remains: Why only produce electric vehicles for the U.S. market, where demand for conventional cars and trucks remains strong? Trump's departure partly explains the shift. "Team Biden says it's bullish on the potential of electric vehicles," the Detroit News reported Nov. 19, 2020.

**What the UAW leadership is — and isn't — saying**

But there is another factor, and one the United Auto Workers union needs to seriously address: lower labor costs. Electric vehicles require fewer components and take less time to build. This means cost

savings for GM; without a serious fight, union members will face major job losses in both parts and final assembly plants.

In a previous study, the UAW concluded that a move away from internal combustion engines could cost 35,000 jobs. On Feb. 10, International President Rory Gamble said GM's scenario "should bear out more discussion." Of the Biden team he asked: "Will there be government support to make sure that these jobs are good-paying American jobs with wages and benefits and that members are free to collectively bargain to protect their standards of living?"

In fact it was the Obama/Biden administration that allowed GM and Chrysler to close over two dozen plants as part of the 2009 bankruptcies and the federal government bailouts.

**Worker's property right to a job**

President Gamble spoke to the media one day before the most important anniversary in UAW history. Feb. 11 marked 84 years since the victory of the famous Flint Sit-down Strike, when workers occupying key plants for 44 days forced GM to recognize the union. Reviving historic demands could help the UAW address current threats to members' livelihoods.

We cannot remember a UAW International President make the point that a job is a worker's "property right" — that workers own their jobs. Waves of plant closings and mass layoffs, which have decimated the union's ranks, are treated as a necessary evil to keep companies "profitable" and "competitive."

But that was the chief legal argument then-UAW lead counsel, attorney

*Electric vehicles require fewer components and take less time to build. This means cost savings for GM. Without a serious fight, union members will face major job losses in both parts and final assembly plants.*



Detroit GM workers on strike, 2019. Now their jobs face a new threat.

Maurice Sugar, made against those who proclaimed the sit-downs were unlawful seizures of company property. Union lawyers "placed the 'worker's right to his job,' a concept which had been recommended for sympathetic consideration by the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations in 1915, as the chief argument in favor of the worker sitting at his machine," making a defense of the occupation. (Edward Levinson, "Labor on the March," 1938)

Even Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy and Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor under President Franklin Roosevelt, agreed with that formulation.

**Six-hour day, no cut in pay!**

There was an important demand of the sit-down strike that to this day has not been realized: a 30-hour week for 40-hours pay. At the time a bill before Congress to establish 30 hours as a lawful workweek narrowly failed. Line workers' productivity has risen exponentially since the UAW's founding in 1935, but they are still working 40 hours or more at physically exhausting jobs — jobs that have become scarce!

The 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act only mandated time-and-a-half after 40 hours and set no limits on how many hours a boss could demand of an employee. The FLSA has never been updated to take into account technological advances that

improve productivity — and eliminate jobs!

The UAW had pushed for a shorter work week, for the same pay, but dropped it after negotiating what is known as "the Treaty of Detroit" in 1950. This included annual raises to compensate for increased productivity, a "Cost of Living Allowance" and "Supplemental Unemployment Benefits" to laid-off workers on top of state unemployment compensation. These and other gains were taken away or reduced, during the 2009 bankruptcies, and have yet to be restored 12 years later.

If the Treaty of Detroit is dead, why not revisit the demand that was abandoned back then — 30 for 40!

If the roughly 150,000 UAW-represented workers at Ford, GM and Chrysler (now part of Stellantis) had their hours reduced to 30 hours per week, there would be work for another 50,000 workers. That's 15,000 new jobs on top of the 35,000 that might be lost through conversion to electric vehicles!

It is past time for organized labor to return to its radical roots and raise radical demands. Six hour day; no cut in pay! A job is a right — we're gonna fight, fight, fight!

*Martha Grevatt is a retired UAW Chrysler worker who served on the executive board of UAW Local 869 and represented the local at the union's 2018 Constitutional Convention.*

# Morgan Lewis lawyers—high-paid union-busting thugs

By Betsey Piette

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, bosses hired Pinkerton Agency goon squads to infiltrate unions, break strikes and intimidate workers who were trying to organize.

Today's hired union-busting thugs are more likely to be high-paid lawyers tasked with turning labor laws — intended to protect workers — into weapons against union organizing. In the 21st century, bosses pay an estimated \$340 million a year to a handful of law firms to do the dirty work to keep their companies union-free.

One particularly nefarious anti-labor firm is Morgan Lewis & Bockius — in 2020 the fourth largest U.S.

law firm with 31 offices, over 2,200 lawyers and nearly \$2.3 billion in annual revenue. Morgan Lewis's website boasts of the firm's ability to help companies "avoid

union penetration and strategically shape bargaining units to minimize potential union organizing victories," claiming to be effective both at the [bargaining] table and in a "behind the scenes role."

In November 2020, when the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU- UFCW) petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for a union election at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Ala., Amazon immediately hired Harry Johnson, a former NLRB member and a lawyer at Morgan Lewis, to fight the election.

Morgan Lewis has insidiously helped Amazon remain union-free for years. It blocked union organizing efforts by technicians in 2014, and more recently it defended the company against workers' lawsuits over inadequate COVID-19 safety and charges of discrimination filed by pro-Black Lives Matter

workers.

Amazon's anti-union propaganda and efforts to delay the Bessemer union vote, manipulate the bargaining unit and appeal the NLRB ruling supporting a mail-in union election come straight from the Morgan Lewis playbook.

Morgan Lewis has had over six decades to hone its union-busting skills. In the 1970s, the company appeared frequently in the AFL-CIO's "Report on Union Busting." In June 1981, Morgan Lewis attorneys representing the Federal Aviation Administration were hired by President Ronald Reagan to infamously break the strike of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). That labor union defeat marked the opening shot in an antilabor offensive still impacting workers to this day.

Major League Baseball hired Morgan Lewis during both the 1990 spring lock-out of players and the 1994-1995 baseball strike. In 2014, the firm was hired by the U.S. Postal Service to represent management's interests during contract negotiations with the American Postal Workers Union.

In September 2018, Morgan Lewis was hired by McDonald's to craft strategy to defeat the Fight for \$15-and-a-Union campaign. Former President Donald Trump nominated Morgan Lewis partner John

Ring to the NLRB, where he specifically promoted rulings that made it harder for McDonald's workers to organize. Around the same time, the Wall Street Journal named Morgan Lewis' top lawyers as members of the "\$1,000-Plus-an-Hour Club," based on the amount they billed. (news.artnet.com, June 11, 2020)

Morgan Lewis' high-paid lawyers have represented many powerful corporations in cases before the NLRB, including General Motors, General Electric, Aramark, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Pfizer, Boeing and Marriott International — always defending the interests of the bosses against the workers.

The law firm also represents anti-union front groups including the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, which opposes democracy and unions in the workplace, and the Coalition for Workplace Safety, which seeks to evade and rescind OSHA rules.

On Feb. 20, cross-country solidarity rallies for the Amazon workers in Bessemer — who've dubbed themselves BAmazon Union — will include a spirited protest outside Morgan Lewis offices in Philadelphia. This and future days of solidarity will offer a way to challenge the firm's union-busting role. A list of the location of other company offices is available on their website. □



SUPPORTAMAZONWORKERS.ORG

*Amazon's anti-union propaganda and efforts to delay the Bessemer union vote, manipulate the bargaining unit and appeal the NLRB ruling supporting a mail-in union election come straight from the Morgan Lewis playbook.*

# Incarcerated workers say: ‘Solidarity with Amazon workers!’

The following letters from incarcerated workers in the Pennsylvania prison system were sent by email on Feb. 13 and 15 to Joe Piette, a member of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.

From SCI Frackville

As I've advised you before, anything that I can do for the people, I will do. At 54 years of age, I'd like to say I did something meaningful with my life and stood for something for the people.

I'm appalled to learn of the working conditions [at Amazon] as well as the low wages there. I find it ironic that, up here in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, they offer \$16 to \$20 per hour entry level. I say this to give you an idea of what they are willing to pay.

But I do know that no one's going to give us anything we don't demand for ourselves. It's power in numbers. Take a stand and mean it, have our family and friends stop patronizing their businesses, and make sure they know what the people are doing.

If it means finding other means to acquiring that

which we desire, be it as it may! They'll get the point. At the end of the day, it's about the bottom line, i.e., the almighty dollar. Currently I was in the process of buying three books from them creeps. This gave me reason to search elsewhere for the books, and as such I have shared this communiqué with those close to me.

Collectively we can make a difference. We have to take the approach of, though they are one of the largest employers, they are not the only employer. And for the record, they got their success off of our backs.

We are in this with y'all. Get what you've/we've earned & settle for nothing less!

Sincerely, your brother in the struggle,

— S. Naiym Harper

From SCI Pine Grove

Amazon is not a new fight for the people of the South for equality and equity in the workplace. Alabama, the very heart of the Civil Rights Movement, finds itself again at the precipice of change, challenging corporate America and big business.

Capitalism at its core is designed for greed and mistreatment of its workforce, only concerned with driving its profits up at all costs. That cost is usually at the expense of its workforce, like now at the Bessemer Amazon [warehouse]. They are being forced to work for low wages and [in] poor and often unsafe working conditions to help Amazon's bottom line.

Unions have long been a check on capitalism's predatory nature. Bessemer Amazon [workers'] fight for unionization is a fight rooted in the history of the South's mistreatment of its workforce, like prison chain gangs, its prisoners in work camps that are required to grow their own crops just to eat, sharecropping and so many other atrocities. The South is steeped in its inequality.

I support the Bessemer Amazon workers' fight for unionization, for safe work conditions and better wages. Amazon will not fix this on their own. This will not work itself out through natural attrition.

The workers of Bessemer Amazon need unity through unionization.

— Wesley Massey

## Montgomery Bus Boycott, Bessemer, prisons Class struggle then and now

Continued from page 1

Internationale, No. 59) He had written a prior essay on the Ku Klux Klan.

Decades later Sam Marcy, the late chairperson and working-class theoretician of Workers World Party, wrote, "Of all the great domestic political problems facing the working class and the oppressed people, none surpasses in importance the relationship of national oppression to the class struggle. Indeed, one may say that it is at the heart of the basic social problem in the United States." (Nov. 25, 1983)

### Montgomery Bus Boycott: a precursor to Black Lives Matter

Black History Month has unfortunately been co-opted by bourgeois forces to focus mainly on past "achievements" of individual Black people and not on the impact of Black-led mass movements in ongoing struggles for national liberation and full equality today.

Take the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott. Bourgeois historians like to portray Rosa Parks as an isolated Black seamstress, who just happened to refuse to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated bus on Dec. 1, 1955.

The truth is that hers was a planned action on the part of the local NAACP, of which Ms. Parks was a secretary. Before the church, where a young Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the pastor, became a main Boycott organizing center, there had long been discussions about organizing a bus boycott.

Dr. King and Ms. Parks may have been the most recognizable faces of the Boycott, but its success lay in the dynamic,

sustained mass movement of the Black community, especially Black women. Organizers galvanized people who had cars — including this writer's parents — to pick up and drop off carless workers, many of whom were domestic workers, at designated sites all around the city. Many walked miles to and from work including in all-white neighborhoods.

This grassroots organizing not only defeated the segregated transportation edict in the former capital of the Confederacy on Dec. 21, 1956, it was the opening shot of the modern day Civil Rights Movement throughout the Deep South — with mass demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, shutdowns and more in the midst of police and KKK violence.

The Bus Boycott was a precursor to today's Black Lives Matter movement, fusing civil rights and workers rights.

### From Montgomery to Bessemer

As this writer wrote in 2000, "No struggle takes place within a vacuum; no struggle is isolated from the general laws of nature and society. [T]o fully understand the Black struggle or the Black experience in the U.S. and its status today, we have to view its development in relationship to the overall class struggle. The Black struggle in this country has many rich lessons for us as workers, as progressives and as revolutionaries." ("What is a nation?" from "A Voice from Harper's Ferry," see [tinyurl.com/yxrc35c9](http://tinyurl.com/yxrc35c9))

One of those rich lessons coming from the Bus Boycott is taking place again in Bessemer, Ala., just 15 miles outside the former steel city of Birmingham.

With a population of less than 30,000,

the city has suddenly gained national and even international attention, because a group of majority Black workers are in the midst of a historic union organizing drive against Amazon — arguably the most powerful global corporation in the U.S. and perhaps the world.

On Feb. 8, these warehouse workers began a mail-in vote on representation, with the backing of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), in response to Amazon's horrific working conditions, a lack of protection from COVID, low wages and racism from white management. And 80% of these workers are African American, with 43% being Black women.

Even though the workers at this Deep South warehouse number around only 5,800 out of a total 935,000 Amazon workers throughout the U.S., their struggle for a union will have an unprecedented ripple effect, not only for the workers in Alabama — only 8% are unionized — but for the entire global working class.

Alabama is one of 27 states with Taft-Hartley "right-to-work" laws. This means that joining a union is not a prerequisite for getting a job; "so-called" open shops thus purposely fracture union solidarity. Workers are then left at the mercy of racist and sexist bosses without any protection against abuse under a collective bargaining agreement.

The struggle to unionize in Bessemer has global implications, because Amazon is a corporation worth close to \$1 trillion, whose profit-hungry tentacles stretch across several continents. Amazon represents modern monopoly capitalism 2.0, while in the 1950s during the Bus Boycott, mom and pop stores alongside Woolworth's were the backbone of the economy.

### Workers need solidarity — everywhere

Another important struggle occurring in parallel to the Bessemer struggle was the Jan. 1-31 strike by incarcerated workers throughout the Alabama Department of Corrections prison system. This work strike and "30 Day Economic Blackout" was led by the Free Alabama Movement. As incarcerated workers, they protested against some of the same conditions raised by the Bessemer workers — super-exploitation, racism, physical brutality, horrific work conditions exacerbated by

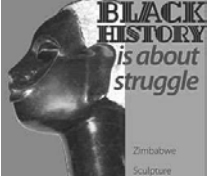


PHOTO: RWDSU

Jennifer Bates, an employee at the Bessemer Amazon facility, has been helping organize the union drive. Of the majority Black workforce there, about half are women.

the pandemic — including no masks, lack of social distancing and healthy food, and more. The ADOC has been deemed by many as the most violent prison system in the country. (Read "Alabama prisons: ON STRIKE!" at [tinyurl.com/y458aakr](http://tinyurl.com/y458aakr))

In Alabama, Black people constitute 28% of state residents, but 43% of people in jail and 54% of people in prison. (al.com) There really is no fundamental difference between the racism and exploitation facing the Bessemer Amazon workers and the Alabama incarcerated workers except for the physical restraint preventing the imprisoned workers from walking out of their cells. As the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party demands, "Free them all!"

Just like the struggle in Montgomery over 65 years ago, the Bessemer Amazon workers and the incarcerated workers in Alabama are also counting on classwide solidarity between the organized and unorganized — not only to win the immediate battles that directly confront them, but to extend their struggle to win the rights of millions of workers globally.

These struggles are the real meaning of what Black History is all about.

The writer was born in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Tweet @MoniFromHome.



Bus boycotters, no matter their age or ability, walked miles to work in Montgomery, Ala., 1956.





**L.D. Barkley**

# A leader in the Attica uprising

By Monica Moorehead

*This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Attica Prison Uprising. The following slightly edited excerpt is from the book “A Time To Die: The Attica Prison Revolt” by the late New York Times writer, Tom Wicker. The original publication in 1975 was followed by 1994 and 2011 editions. Wicker was a member of a negotiating team invited by the prisoners to help present their demands to the public from Sept. 9-13, the day that then New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller ordered state police officers and prison guards to open fire for six minutes slaughtering 29 unarmed incarcerated workers and 10 guards taken hostage. Russell Oswald was New York’s Commissioner of Correctional Services.*

*One of those massacred was L.D. Barkley, who had emerged as an important spokesperson for the rebellion, whose role is described in the excerpt below. Barkley was a brilliant example, similar to the martyred George Jackson, of evolving into a revolutionary activist and leader behind the walls at a young age. Barkley, like so many of his fellow Attica comrades, was tragically never allowed to realize his revolutionary potential but his inspiring words and actions will live on.*

Elliot James Barkley was 21 years old, a tall Black from Rochester, New York, with a history of drug use. Convicted at 18 for cashing a forged money order for \$124.60, he had been sent to the Elmira Reformatory for four years. Paroled in

January 1970, he rejoined his family, who were rated good people in the Black community of Rochester; but then he was picked up for driving without a license, a violation of parole.



L.D. Barkley, second from the right, and other Attica rebellion leaders negotiating with prison officials, September 1971.

For that, he was sent to the maximum security prison at Attica where — although he was in no real sense a leader — he became a well-known exercise-yard orator. When D-yard was organized after the uprising, Barkley and Richard Clark were elected to represent A-block inmates.

Roger Champen recalled:

“Barkley was more close to me than any of those I’ve mentioned. Primarily because he’s younger and the fact that I relate to younger people more readily than older ones, because of the fact that I figured if I had had someone to tell me the things that I know now, perhaps I would have looked at life differently earlier. So I tried primarily to reach out for the younger element.

“[B]arkley and I used to read. I gave him law books. I tried to get him involved in law. He was an excellent reader. He would read; he would have an appetite

for reading that was tremendous. He would come and get books from me to read, and then we’d sit down and discuss it. [B]eing that he was young and inexperienced, books — I tried to explain

to him — were just an outline of life. You had to actually live life; you couldn’t live like out of a book. The book gives you the diagram for life, the outline, and you fill in the rest for yourself. ...

“And he was eager to get back outside, to go in the community and work in the community. He felt that he could help younger children.”

If Russell Oswald did not know L.D. Barkley — no one in Rochester or in Attica seems to know how Elliot James Barkley became known as “L.D.” — when Oswald first entered the D-yard strong-

hold, he surely did when he emerged from it for the second time that Thursday night, Sept. 9. Barkley, with television cameras carrying his image and words to the world, again presented the inmates’ “immediate demands.” More than that, with his reedy voice, his youthful face and “granny glasses,” his fiery manner and words, he conveyed the anger, the frustration, the determination that everyone who entered D-yard sensed in the inmates — at least among their active and articulate leaders.

“We have composed this declaration [L.D. began] to the people of America to let them know exactly how we feel and what it is that they must do, and what we want, primarily, and not what we — what someone else wants for us. We’re talking about what we want.

“[T]here seems to be a little misunderstanding about why this

incident developed here at Attica, and this declaration here will explain the reasons.

“The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is not a result of the dastardly bushwhacking of two prisoners Sept. 8 of 1971, but of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administrative network of this prison throughout the year. We are men! We are not beasts and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such.

“The entire prison populace — that means each and every one of us here — has set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States. What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed.

“We will not compromise on any terms except those terms which are agreeable to us. We call upon all the conscientious citizens of America to assist us in putting an end to this situation that threatens the lives of not only us, but of each and every one of you as well. We have set forth demands that will bring us closer to the reality.

- We want complete amnesty, meaning freedom from all and any physical, mental and legal reprisals.
- We want, now, speedy and safe transportation out of confinement to a non-imperialist country.
- We demand that the federal government intervene so that we will be under direct federal jurisdiction. We want the governor and the judiciary to guarantee that there will be no reprisals, and we want all facets of the media to articulate this.”

Russell Oswald, hearing all this from a few feet away, decided L.D. Barkley was a “pure revolutionary.” □



## 50 years after his death

# George Jackson on the role of prisons

By Monica Moorehead

*This year will mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of George Jackson, an African American prison leader sentenced to a life sentence as a teenager for “stealing” \$40 from a gas station. His 11 years behind the walls were spent in California’s Soledad and San Quentin prisons. Jackson became a revolutionary leader revered by those inside and outside the walls everywhere. Upon hearing of Jackson being killed at the age of 29 by a prison guard on Aug. 21, 1971, in San Quentin, incarcerated workers inside of Attica refused to eat in protest which was a prelude to their heroic uprising less than three weeks later on Sept. 9. And Aug. 21, 1970, has come to be known as “Bloody Sunday.”*

*Jackson was made a member of the People’s Revolutionary Army within the Black Panther Party with the rank of general and field marshal. He was put in charge of prison recruitment for the BPP. At Jackson’s funeral, BPP co-founder, Huey P. Newton, gave the eulogy, saying in part, “George Jackson was my hero. He set a standard for prisoners, political prisoners, for people. He inspired prisoners, whom I later encountered, to put his ideas into practice, and so his spirit*

*became a living thing. [H]e will go into immortality, because we believe that the people will win as they advance, generation upon generation.”*

*In tribute to this martyred leader are slightly edited excerpts from Jackson’s second book, “Blood in My Eye,” completed less than a week before his death and released in 1972.*

The men who placed themselves above the rest of society through guile, fortuitous outcome of circumstance and sheer brutality have developed two principal institutions to deal with any and all serious disobedience — the prison and institutionalized racism. There are more prisons of all categories in the United States than in all other countries of the world combined.

At all times there are two-thirds of a million people or more confined to these prisons. Hundreds are destined to be legally executed, thousands more

quasi-legally. Other thousands will never again have any freedom of movement barring a revolutionary change in all the institutions that combine to make up the order of things.

Two-thirds of a million people may not seem like a great number compared with the total population of 200 million.

However, compared with the 1 million who are responsible for all the affairs of men within the extended state, it constitutes a striking contrast. What I want to explore now are a few of the subtle elements that I have observed to be standing in the path of a much needed united front (nonsectarian) to effectively reverse this legitimized rip-off.

Prisons were not institutionalized on such a massive scale by the people. Most people realize that crime is simply the result of a grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege, a reflection of the present state of property relations.

There are no wealthy men on death



George Jackson

# Voices from behind the walls

**‘I’m not imprisoned, I’m enslaved’**

*From SCI Rockview, Pennsylvania*

One of the main reasons I send this letter is because I have been reading Workers World for approximately the last four years, and I’m not sure if journalists at WW are aware that certain words/phrases may be misleading and/or unknowingly aid in keeping “prisoners” uninformed.

Prime example: The overseers use words like “Inmate Employment Office,” “Work Assignment,” “Hourly Wage,” “Raise,” “[no] Overtime Pay,” etc., to give the illusion that they see us as something other than slaves.

Even the words prison and prisoner are misnomers since approximately one-half century ago, their own experts advised that no new institutions for adults should be built, and existing institutions for juveniles should be closed. This is based on their finding that prisons, reformatories have achieved nothing but an overwhelming failure, and overwhelming evidence proves such institutions create crime rather than prevent it.

Labeling us “prisoners” misleads one to think there was some legitimate need for our “confinement” instead of showing it’s all about greed and economics. And it helps hide the fact that Lincoln never ended slavery; they simply

remodeled plantations and renamed them penitentiaries.

I’m not imprisoned, I’m **enslaved**. I’m not **in** a prison, I’m **on** a plantation. We’re not just **workers**, we’re being **worked**.

And please understand, this letter is



DAMON LOCKS FOR JUSTSEEDS.ORG

not an act of criticism; I only wished to show the words we choose to paint with determine whether the picture ends up being 2-D or 3-D.

I believe it was in one of your articles that it said: “This fight won’t be won in the courts, but instead it will be won in the streets,” or something to that effect and in line with what Audre Lorde said,

“The Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house.”

And I understand that sometimes we have to articulate to people on the level they understand, but the masses likely don’t realize we’re slaves if the majority of “prisoners” don’t even recognize it.

I had to pull out the U.S. Constitution and show numerous “prisoners” before they would believe they’re slaves.

And Harriet Tubman said: “I could have helped free a lot more slaves if only I could have made them realize that they were slaves.”

Only when I realized that I was a slave did I become mentally free. Now these overseers will have to kill me before I pick any more cotton or build his pyramids.

Thank you for your attention in this matter and all the help you provide in giving a voice to the voiceless.

Sincerely in Solidarity,  
**Abdul Elshabazz**

**‘COVID illnesses and deaths rage’**

*Jaana Laaman is a political prisoner and former member of Students for a Democratic Society, the United Freedom Front and the Ohio 7. An ally of both the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, Laaman has been in state prison since 1984.*

Dear WW people —  
I think I am okay. As you probably



know, this prison has been on a pandemic lockdown since March. There has been COVID in here for some months. Yesterday it hit my block, 1A. A fully PPE’d nurse wheeled out one more yesterday. Then they nasal swabbed a few men and later took everyone’s temperature. (This is the first time I’ve ever been temp checked.)

This morning more fully PPE’d nurses carried a man out on a stretcher — he was awake but looked bad. Then they actually came to each cell and nasal swabbed everyone. So we are totally locked down now.

Meanwhile, of course, the COVID illnesses and deaths rage — hopefully Biden & Harris will handle the vaccines and COVID overall better. Of course we also need to be very alert for Biden & the Dems kicking off an invasion or war as they try to embrace the position of U.S. imperialism in the world. Still, it will be good to see Trump gone.

Of course, like many people, I am sure, I’ve missed the words and direction of WW. I’m sure you (all) remain active and look forward to a regular paper again.

Stay healthy + active — COVID or not.  
Black Lives Matter,  
**Jaana Laaman**

## Pennsylvania interview

# Incarcerated worker fights for medical rights

**By Joe Piette**  
**Philadelphia**

*On Feb. 3, Joe Piette of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party interviewed Bryant Arroyo, imprisoned at State Correctional Institute Frackville. A previous Dec 21 interview can be read at [workers.org/2020/12/53514/](https://workers.org/2020/12/53514/).*

**WW:** You’re out of COVID quarantine now?

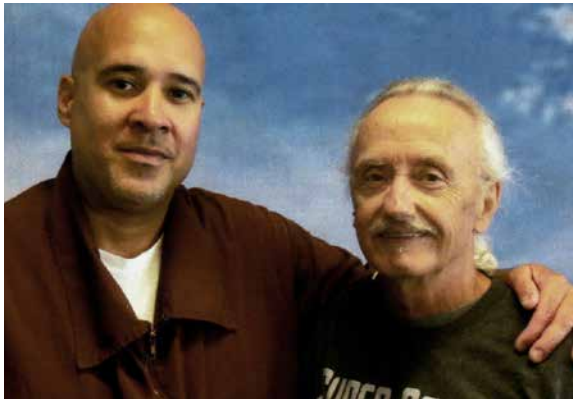
**BA:** Yeah. I got some updates for you. For starters, the RN a few days ago informed me that my multivitamins were given to me on Jan. 19. And I said absolutely not. I never received them. I wrote to the supervisor, registered nurse supervisor Ms. Megan Delpais, BSN, RNS. I did get the 14-day COVID-19 treatment, which is vitamin D3, C and zinc. But the doctor told me that he was going to follow up and provide me with the 30-day prescription of multivitamins. I didn’t receive those.

On Jan 19, the day that I was released from the RHU (Restricted Housing Unit), James Price passed away. [I was] informed of that from the chaplain. I remember him from the law library. I think he was in his late 50s. I’m assuming it was COVID. They didn’t say, but most likely. Aside from his other issues he was suffering from medically — it could be a combination of such — but nonetheless, I personally believe it was COVID.

**WW:** That’s why all seniors should be released! How are COVID-positive seniors being treated?

**BA:** The Pennsylvania Dept. of Corrections is doing numerous things that they shouldn’t be doing, [and not doing what] they should be adhering to and following up when it comes to that particular vulnerable group. For example, Aaron Fox, #AM-4857, tested positive for COVID on Nov. 25, 2020. He was quoted in a Philadelphia Inquirer article. ([tinyurl.com/1ew2lrhp](https://tinyurl.com/1ew2lrhp)) He was quarantined for 14 days without ever receiving the 14-day vitamin treatment regimen. Upon my release from the 12-day quarantine in the RHU, I informed Mr. Fox that we all filled sick call-slips during our quarantine, requesting to be provided with the vitamin regimen plus Motrin to treat and counter the effects of COVID. The regimen was stipulated by Secretary [of Corrections] Wetzel in his PowerPoint presentation during the State Democratic Senate policy hearing Jan. 7. ([tinyurl.com/qmxvkw7](https://tinyurl.com/qmxvkw7))

com/1ew2lrhp) He was quarantined for 14 days without ever receiving the 14-day vitamin treatment regimen. Upon my release from the 12-day quarantine in the RHU, I informed Mr. Fox that we all filled sick call-slips during our quarantine, requesting to be provided with the vitamin regimen plus Motrin to treat and counter the effects of COVID. The regimen was stipulated by Secretary [of Corrections] Wetzel in his PowerPoint presentation during the State Democratic Senate policy hearing Jan. 7. ([tinyurl.com/qmxvkw7](https://tinyurl.com/qmxvkw7))



Bryant Arroyo (left) and Joe Piette at SCI Frackville, 2018.

Mr. Fox sent a request slip to the medical department indicating he was diagnosed with COVID and that the PA DOC memo says: “I shall be prescribed a 14-day regimen of vitamins, C, D and zinc.” In response Ms. Delpais stated: “The providers typically order these when you first have the virus. Please request sick call to discuss.” The medical department never provided Mr. Fox with the 14-day vitamin treatment during his 14-day quarantine, which violates both the Hippocratic Oath and [constitutional] Eighth Amendment rights under cruel and unusual treatment. Presently, Mr. Fox awaits the medical department to call and speak with him.

In another case, Benther Michael, #JJ-9777, was notified that he was receiving a cellie, Raymone Ford, #NJ-4561,

who had tested positive for COVID. Michael inquired to the Unit Manager of RHU, Ms. Styka, “Is this individual going to enter my cell?”

She replied that before the night was over, all the cells were going to be filled because there were numerous COVID positives coming in. He yelled out to her: “I’ve been under COVID treatment for the past eight days, and by you allowing this individual into my cell, you’re endangering my life as well as his. Because now I’m eight days clear on my COVID prescription medication, and now you’re gonna negate that status by sickening me with another COVID positive.”

She just repeated they were gonna fill up all the cells. Placing the individual inside the cell was a total breach of COVID protocol. The people who are in charge of medical, the director or any of the doctors, did not approve that move. Ms. Styka made that decision arbitrarily because there were other cells that were open, and she didn’t fill them.

**WW:** There were empty cells?

**BA:** Yes. Cell 12 was empty — nobody in it. So it’s a fiction to say the COVID protocol in place is being adhered to, not only by the higher ups but those in the unit managerial position. They’re endangering the welfare and lives of those that aren’t testing positive by reinfecting them again. The dereliction of duty goes all the way up to PA DOC Secretary John E. Wetzel.

A study in the NY Times revealed many people are ending up in the hospital under ventilation machines, not because they had certain infirmities prior to contracting COVID, but because they’ve been exposed numerous times. So you’re gonna re-expose a prisoner outright! That’s reprehensible! And these are the people that are supposed to be adhering

to care, custody and control. Totally out of control.

COVID is an insidiously virulent disease which statistically has done some really bizarre and tragic things to those of us who unwittingly and unsuspectingly tested positive for COVID. On the B/B Wing here, they’ve evacuated and hospitalized two prisoners who tested positive and have developed mysterious staph infections in their foot/ankle areas. Currently, both have been hospitalized and — no coincidence — both are Black males from 45-60 years old.

Wetzel should be terminated not for just serving and protecting the “status quo,” but for failing to take prophylactic measures to combat all the pervasive, virulent mutations of COVID by providing the customary cocktail of vitamins to protect/serve every prisoner in the PA DOC from contracting COVID. Most of us should know now that, for instance, vitamin D3 is imperative at keeping COVID at bay.

Let’s not forget, Secretary Wetzel has a fiduciary duty and responsibility to provide every prisoner with adequate medical care and treatment. Scientifically, it is an incontrovertible fact that the more melanin in an individual person’s skin, the less absorption of vitamin D from the sun is possible. Obviously, sun exposure [inside here] is extremely limited based on restricted movements to access the outdoors yard, coupled with inclement weather which exacerbates the situation.

Therefore, you would think Wetzel would incorporate the appropriate prophylactic measures stipulating the medical department to provide vitamins D, C and zinc to all prisoners in the PA DOC. Secretary Wetzel is employed by the prisoners’ friends and family members — the taxpaying citizens. Wetzel works for us — not the other way around! For these and many other reasons, Wetzel should be fired! □



# A transgender incarcerated activist speaks out

By Judy Greenspan

*Lisa Strawn is a transgender woman who spent more than 35 years in California prisons due to that state’s draconian “Three Strikes” law. At the age of 19, she was locked up for petty offenses like prostitution, and on her third “strike,” Lisa was sentenced to 50-to-life for burglary. She has been incarcerated in California State Prison, Corcoran; the California Medical Facility at Vacaville and San Quentin State Prison. While inside, she was an activist and organizer on behalf of the LGBTQ+ incarcerated community. After contracting COVID inside San Quentin during the peak of the pandemic there, she was finally released to the community July 14, 2020 — still with COVID. She has continued her advocacy for her siblings inside. This is part 1 of a two-part interview conducted with Strawn on Dec. 30, 2020, by Judy Greenspan, a member of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party.*



Lisa Strawn

**Judy Greenspan:** Lisa, what was it like for transgender prisoners when you first got locked up?

**Lisa Strawn:** I pretty much have been incarcerated my entire life since the age of 19. I started transitioning at 19. I started out at a level three prison, then I went to a level four, then a level three, then level two. And for me personally, being at a level four, there was so much more respect there from staff and the other incarcerated people (at Corcoran) than any of the other prisons including San Quentin.

Right before I had got to Corcoran, and that was in 1998, the staff were betting money on the inmates, the gladiator

fighters. And all those investigations were coming down, and I got there at the very end of it. So I think that really changed the spectrum of how they were treating people because, for the most part, we didn’t have any problems.

Up until 2005, we weren’t allowed to have hormones, and then it became a federal law, because this girl actually sued the Department of Corrections. And because she won the lawsuit, then they had to start giving us the hormone. They had to. I was at Corcoran.

**JG:** How were you treated by the prison guards after Corcoran?

**LS:** It was a struggle at CMF because the staff, they were so transphobic, homophobic. And I can remember many times when I literally had to call them out and embarrass them in front of their own people. There was a tour one day, and I could hear this sergeant say, “Oh, no, that’s a guy.” And I immediately stopped, and I let him have it.

And then it was just a huge scene. Then the watch commander was calling me on the phone: “Lisa, oh, he wants to talk to you, he wants to apologize.” And I was like, fuck him. I don’t want to talk to him. And then when I did meet him, I cussed him out. I said, “How dare you disrespect me like that in front of people who don’t even know nothing about me?” And I went on and on. He actually tried to talk to me in the hallway, and I walked away from it.

I got write-ups all the time. I mean, I had gotten a write-up right before I left on CMF Vacaville to go to San Quentin, because the officer said I wouldn’t get on the wall. Then I started doing paperwork about, well, I’m a woman, I shouldn’t be in a man’s prison, and I want to go to a women’s prison. And then there was the issue: “Well, if you want to stay here, you have to move to a dorm.” So I stood right in the hallway. And it was with a captain. And I looked at him, and I said, “Look at me. I’m wearing a bra, panties, makeup. My name is Lisa. It’s not Thomas. It’s Lisa. So do you really think that you’re going to put me in a dorm with child molesters and rapists?” And he just looked at me and says, “I’ll be back.”

And towards the end, it got really ugly because I became so political. Anything that I didn’t like, I was calling Sacramento, the ombudsman and other people and bitching. And so they booted me out of the prison. And it was actually the best thing they could do.

**JG:** When did you get involved in LGBTQ+ activism from the inside?

**LS:** I stayed at CMF for 10 years. And that’s when I really started doing a lot of

navigating and being involved with the trans community, the LGBT community. We had two support groups. And then I put a third group in the prison. We had a transgender-only group. I was elected as the first transgender person on the Inmate Advisory Council. I started an LGBT group.

San Quentin, the day I got there ... I was already the kind of person that was so involved with so many people on the outside in many organizations. And I was just like, okay, I have to come here, and I have to do amazing things too. And there was so much of a phobia. The guys, I mean, they were rude. They were just freaking rude. You know, make smartass comments, and I’m so not that one. And I just immediately got into journalism school ... and I just really got involved. I navigated everything. And then I helped put the transgender support group in the prison and LGBTQ group.

**JG:** Tell me about the first Transgender Day of Remembrance that you organized at San Quentin.

**LS:** My thing was like promoting the rights of the LGBTQ community. And having the Transgender Day of Remembrance ... that had never happened at that prison. Ever. It’ll never happen again. They still say that that was the biggest event that they’ve ever had. Because this bitch brought a senator inside that prison. Nobody else had done that.



But Transgender Day of Remembrance, it wasn’t just about the trans people who have been killed. I wanted to make sure that San Quentin got it right. So I had asked straight guys, “Do you guys want to be a part of this?” Nobody turned me down. I sent out personal invitations to so many people. And there was so many people who responded, they couldn’t let everybody in. We had 18 acts that performed in three hours. I was able to say for the first time San Quentin got it right ... Not only do we now have groups for everybody, every gender, every race, religion, now we did it. And it was the best day. □

## WORKERS WORLD ISN'T OUR NEWSPAPER. IT'S YOURS.

**We want to hear from you, our subscribers behind the walls. Write to us and let us know you're submitting a letter for *Tear Down the Walls!* and we'll publish as many statements from incarcerated workers as we can.**

**Do you consider yourself an "incarcerated worker"?  
Do you think it's time we stopped using the term "prisoner"?  
Do you have grievances or organizing actions you'd like to report on?**

**Write us. Let us know. Because this is your newspaper.**

### ATTN: TEAR DOWN THE WALLS!

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## Leonard Peltier

# Defense committee urgently needs support



The International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee has launched an urgent appeal for funds to support legal efforts to free this Native political prisoner, who has been held in U.S. dungeons for nearly 45 years.

Peltier is a leader of the American Indian Movement, who was framed and jailed for the 1975 deaths of two FBI agents who had invaded the Jumping Bull compound on Pine Ridge Reservation and started a shootout at dawn, over a warrant for alleged theft of a pair of cowboy boots. (tinyurl.com/y4ncc5ee) FBI intervention had increased following the 1973 AIM-led occupation of the town of Wounded Knee, site of the 1890 U.S. 7th Cavalry’s massacre of Big Foot’s Band of 300 Lakota, who were starving and struggling in blizzard conditions to reach the new reservation and surrender.

The ILPDC strategy is three-pronged. First, at Peltier’s request, lawyers will be working to get him transferred closer to his family on the Turtle Mountain Reservation

in North Dakota. Second, his legal team will continue to work on a possible parole hearing for early summer. Third, the attorney in Peltier’s first-amendment case in Seattle, Wash., is prepared for trial this summer.

Despite strong support by former U.S. Attorney James Reynolds, 55 members of Congress and international dignitaries including Bishop Desmond Tutu, the U.S. government refuses to release Peltier, whose health is rapidly failing after more than four decades of incarceration.

To make a donation to Peltier’s legal effort and to support his campaign for freedom, please go to the ILPDC Facebook Page (facebook.com/PeltierHQ/) and to the fundraiser. (tinyurl.com/yxtkb77a) This is the year to free Leonard Peltier!

— Report by Judy Greenspan



# Solidarity with Amazon organizing

Continued from page 1

them. Management and human resources were simply disregarding their cries or their complaints. ...

“This campaign is as important as folks believe it to be. These workers are mistreated as much as you are hearing. This is a very real campaign. It’s very much a fight that we’re in. ... Amazon has had two months worth of time to have captive meetings with these workers against their will and to use this information and the ability to twist that information from [professional anti-union consultants] that they’re paying \$3,000 a day for.”

Michael “Big Mike” Foster, another critical lead organizer for RWDSU, gave more insight on the campaign: “We didn’t just show up at Amazon. The workers from Amazon called us; because they have been crying out with their voices, and Amazon has ignored them the whole time. So we got together with the group, and we put a plan together to come out

here and help these people. And it has turned into amazing things ...

“We have a saying at RWDSU that we want our people to have not just a minimum wage, but a living wage, because we’re tired of just paying bills around here. We want to be able to enjoy life a little bit also. We want to be able to take a vacation to simple places like Panama City, Fla., every now and then. I think everybody deserves to be able to enjoy a little money, and not just barely pay your rent every month or barely be able to afford groceries every month. That’s just not enough.”

## Solidarity among Southern workers

Dante Strobino, an organizer with the Southern Workers Assembly, a network of dozens of Southern labor and community organizations, discussed why the SWA initiated the call for the February 20 National Days of Action in solidarity with Bessemer.

“With 55 to 60% of all Black people living in the South — in Bessemer City, 85% Black workers — we know that this has

been a region that has historically been unorganized. And organized labor needs to use this opportunity to finally defeat the anti-union right-to-work laws, the Jim Crow bans on collective bargaining like we face in North Carolina.

“But seeing poultry workers like Brother Big Mike and others that are supporting these workers, you being unionized and helping to support others in this major corporation to unionize, shows that this rank-and-file initiative is going to be victorious. We have confidence that you’re going to win this union vote. But whether you win it or not, we know that is just one stage in this fight and in building and maintaining the rank-and-file organization to act like a union and to keep fighting.

“We’ve been building these local workers assemblies to bring together worker activists, unions, communities, to organize other unorganized. And you’re doing it, you’re showing what a workers assembly can do, bringing together organized workers to organize other unorganized workers. Particularly we know the most oppressed Black workers are always going to lead, have historically led this.”

## Deep roots of struggle

Monica Moorehead, a WW managing editor and coauthor of the 2007 book, “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle,” spoke on the historical significance of this union drive.

“February 12th is the 43rd anniversary of the Memphis sanitation workers strike, when Black sanitation workers walked off the job demanding equal justice compared to whites in the areas of higher wages, better working conditions and long overdue

equality. Two months later, they won important concessions. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis, helping to bring national and international attention to this very important struggle.

“Now, fast forward to what is happening in Bessemer with another historic development that is also majority African American and almost half of them women. And that is the union drive to organize the Amazon warehouse.

“As a Black woman whose roots run deep in Alabama soil, I’m here to pledge my solidarity with the Bessemer workers’ right to unionize, because they are not only fighting for their rights but for the rights of millions of workers globally. And the whole world will be watching.”

## Actions on Feb. 20 and beyond

Comments came from Chris Smalls, a former Amazon worker fired for leading a walkout of Staten Island Amazon workers in protest of COVID-19 workplace conditions, and from Megan Murray, a former Whole Foods employee and organizer in the Whole Worker campaign in Philadelphia. They spoke about the abusive tactics of Amazon management and the need to support Bessemer workers.

This electrifying organizing meeting shows how deep the solidarity is with Bessemer Amazon workers and how labor and community can work together to develop union drives into mass movements. The meeting ended with over two dozen reports on Feb. 20 solidarity actions, which have grown to include over 30 cities. For a complete list of actions and to get involved, visit [supportamazonworkers.org](http://supportamazonworkers.org). □



In the rain at the support rally for Bessemer Amazon workers, Feb. 6.

# ‘Release Mumia NOW!’ was the cry

By Joe Piette  
Philadelphia

On less than 24 hours’ notice, more than 40 people came out on Feb. 15 to show their opposition to a Feb. 3 legal brief by Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, a so-called “progressive.” It denies Mumia Abu-Jamal the right to prove his innocence in court.

A member of the Black Panther Party as a teenager, and a justice-seeking journalist known as the “Voice of the Voiceless,” Abu-Jamal was falsely convicted of murder by the racist injustice system almost four decades ago. He was summarily condemned to death row.

Supporters have waged a dedicated U.S. and international campaign to liberate Abu-Jamal ever since. Current efforts focus on getting a new hearing that might bring to light any evidence kept out of his trial and subsequent appeals.

There certainly is new evidence. DA Krasner and his office staff were actually the ones who found six hidden

boxes of exculpatory evidence that expose former prosecutorial misconduct in Abu-Jamal’s case.

Mumia’s lawyers will respond with their own legal brief to State Superior Court in the coming weeks.

A statement issued by Mobilization4Mumia to the rally said in part that “Following in the steps of Lynn Abraham, Ron Castille, Seth Williams and other notoriously corrupt DAs” Krasner’s 125-page brief “puts a seal of approval on the outrageously racist actions of [the original trial] Judge Sabo.... Instead of considering all the evidence that has been gathered since the 1981 trial, Krasner is basing his line of arguments on the fabrications and lies that helped to unfairly convict Mumia in the first place.... Krasner’s office is refusing to acknowledge that the similar charges of misconduct his office used in exonerating 18 other innocent men also apply to Abu-Jamal’s case.”

The rally was held defiantly and directly in front of Krasner’s workplace and his plate glass window emblazoned in gold with “Office of the Philadelphia District Attorney.” Among those speaking was Pam Africa, minister



Pam Africa (right) speaking.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

of confrontation for the MOVE organization and a central activist in the uncompromising International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. A carload of supporters from New York City joined Philadelphia supporters in holding signs and banners and listening to speakers for two hours, despite frigid weather.

To support the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom, contact [mobilization4mumia@gmail.com](mailto:mobilization4mumia@gmail.com). □

## Honor Black History Month — Support WW

Workers World newspaper makes a big deal about Black History Month because racism pervades every aspect of life under capitalism. Every struggle — from fighting for living-wage jobs to ending police terror, from winning affordable housing to community-controlled schools — is rooted in the centuries-long battle to end this country’s most vicious history of racism. We are still dealing with the legacy of slavery — that heinous, violence-driven form of superexploitation that reemerged in a new form with the demise of Black Reconstruction.

That’s why every month, not just February, this newspaper chronicles the struggles of peoples of African descent and their allies to eradicate institutionalized,

systemic white supremacy. A case in point is our continuing coverage of the movements to free political prisoners — like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jalil Muntaqim, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, and Imam Jamil Al-Amin — and to honor the legacies of trail-blazing Black women such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Cicely Tyson.

WW bases our weekly coverage of the Black struggle here and in the African diaspora on breaking imperialist chains and the principle of self-determination. Oppressed nationalities have the right to fight to end all forms of inequality and injustice — by any means necessary.

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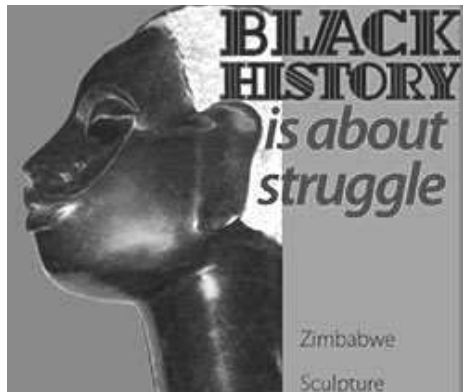
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# KAREN LEWIS, 1953-2021

## Lessons from a teacher, leader and courageous fighter

By Otis Grotewohl

The global working-class, Black liberation and labor movements lost a courageous fighter when Karen Lewis — former president of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), who famously led a militant, seven-day strike in 2012 — passed away Feb. 7 after a long battle with cancer.

### Dedicated teacher and militant fighter

Born on the South Side of Chicago on July 20, 1953, Lewis was the daughter of school teachers. She attended public schools in Chicago, such as Kenwood Academy High School, and attended Dartmouth College in 1972, where she was the sole Black woman in the Class of 1974. (Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10)

Lewis became a chemistry teacher shortly after college, and she joined the Chicago Teachers Union — an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) — in 1988. In 2008, she became active in a reform caucus of the CTU known as the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE). This caucus challenged the national AFT leadership in many ways regarding crucial issues such as charter



Karen Lewis PHOTO: JOHN W. IWANSKI VIA FLICKR

schools and so-called school “reform.” From the beginning, CORE was involved with various, progressive community struggles in the city. Workers World spoke with Bob Quélos, an activist who knew Lewis personally and was involved in a 2008 campaign to stop then-Mayor Richard Daley’s bid to host the 2016 Olympics. “While most radical minded people were afraid of standing up to Mayor Daley, Karen was not,” Quélos recalls. “She stood on the frontlines against the neoliberal project.”

In 2010, Lewis ran for CTU president on a CORE slate and won. As a strong voice against racism, budget cuts and school closings, her election victory was significant to Black educators, students,

parents and community activists throughout Chicago. As one middle-school teacher, Kimberly Goldbaum, stated, “The emergence of CORE allowed many of us African Americans to go, ‘This is something we can get with.’” (Labor Notes, Feb. 10)

In 2012, Chicago teachers were facing arbitrary evaluations and the threat of merit pay, while being denied a promised 4% raise. With Lewis as its president, the CTU struck for seven days and forced the city and then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel to ease up on evaluations and not unleash merit pay.

The 2012 strike was the first teachers strike in Chicago in 25 years. And the CTU mounted another labor action in 2016. Lewis was reelected as CTU president in 2013 but stepped down in 2014 due to illness and was replaced by Jesse Sharkey, another CORE activist who had served as her vice president.

### Paving the way for strike wave

In 2018, teachers and education workers throughout the U.S. — starting with West Virginia, then Oklahoma, Arizona and others — walked out by the thousands against low pay, high insurance costs and

privatization schemes. Education workers who participated in these walkouts also formed caucuses with a platform similar to that of CORE. Many of the education workers wore “Red for Ed” T-shirts and hats to protest.

The education workers that struck in states with Republican governors and legislators were fighting for the same reasons that the CTU fought against Democratic mayors in 2012 and 2016. These defiant work actions generally took place in states that had legislatively ruled teacher and public employee strikes illegal.

It is certain that the “Red for Ed” movement would not exist today without Karen Lewis’s legacy.

The CTU held a virtual shiva — a period of mourning observed in Judaism — on Feb. 10 to grieve the death of Lewis. (Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10) The CTU released a statement in her honor: “Karen did not just lead our movement. Karen was our movement. She bowed to no one and gave strength to tens of thousands of Chicago Teachers Union educators, who followed her lead and who live by her principles to this day.” (WBEZ Chicago, Feb. 8)

Karen Lewis, presente! □

## Defeat HB241/SB582!

# LGBTQ2S+ youth targeted again in Florida

By Devin Cole  
Occupied Muscogee Creek/  
Seminole/Timucua Land



In January 2020, Florida LGBTQ+ organizers mobilized thousands of people against 10 anti-LGBTQ2S+ bills. Introduced into the Florida House of Representatives and with identical accompanying bills in the state Senate, they constituted a blatant attack on LGBTQ2S+ people. The proposals mainly targeted youth, from censoring LGBTQ2S+ education in schools to criminalizing transgender youth who go on hormone replacement therapy. Fortunately, the mobilization was successful and all 10 anti-LGBTQ2S+ bills were defeated.

This year, so far, only one bill has made a return, but it’s particularly odious. House Bill 241 and its accompanying Senate Bill 582 once again target LGBTQ2S+ youth and all youth seeking reproductive health care.

HB241/SB582 establishes a “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” which is supposedly meant to increase the interaction of parents with their children’s schooling and health. Of course, that is how the right wing would phrase it: It’s a bill to bring the family closer together by getting parents more involved in the lives of their children.

However, upon closer inspection, this bill has the potential to destroy the lives of many children, as it firmly establishes children as the property of their parents, incapable of being their own persons and making their own decisions. It rips away any sort of privacy that children may have, or more importantly, may need to have in order to survive in their homes.

Under this “Parents’ Bill of Rights,” parents would have complete and total control over any information given by students to their teachers, guidance counselors, school workers or doctors. The bill would make it illegal for any information given

by children to the aforementioned caretakers, concerning their health and well-being, to be withheld from parents, either inadvertently or intentionally.

What this means is that if a child comes out as LGBTQ+ to a teacher, guidance counselor or any other school official, that individual would have to immediately provide this information to the parents of the child. If a child asks their doctor in a private setting about birth control, or any sort of sexual education or HIV/AIDS education, the doctor would have to immediately provide this information to their parents.

With rates of violence against LGBTQ2S+ youth growing, the issue of a child being outed to their parents creates major concerns over the child’s safety. Violence and disowning are two common tactics of bigoted parents when they learn they have a child who is part of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Ultimately what this bill seeks to do is totally remove autonomy from youth, with a particular focus on LGBTQ2S+ youth. It is a bill aimed at suppressing a more inclusive curriculum in schools and suppressing an undeniable part of history. Right-wing conservatives like Florida State Rep. Erin Grall will harp on how family is important for the development of youth, but will fight tooth and nail to make sure “family” functions only one way: heterosexual and patriarchal.

### Youth need rights, not ‘fixing’

This writer recalls that during their time in high school, 12 years ago, a gay friend and classmate from a right-wing, evangelical family was outed to their parents by peers. They were subjected to harsh punishment and total lockdown by their parents until they “corrected their ways.” Some of my friend’s church peers, who went to the same school, were

instructed to “monitor” them throughout the school day. And my friend could only speak and associate with a pre-approved list of friends their parents had.

If they were caught speaking to anyone on their parents’ other list — the list of “sinful, immoral bad influences” (of which this writer was one) — they were further punished. This had a traumatic effect on them and led to a detrimental relationship with their family now they are an openly queer adult.

If you find yourself wondering just what the repercussions of HB241/SB582 would look like, consider this anecdote. In terms of what has historically happened to LGBTQ2S+ people with regards to trying to live openly, this is mild in terms of the violence we face, especially LGBTQ2S+ youth.

Where is the assistance for LGBTQ2S+ youth who are put out on the streets at alarmingly high rates? Nowhere to be found. Instead they are targeted in an already oppressive society to be erased and, more horrifically, “corrected” or “fixed.”

Youth must have the right to shape their destiny. It is the job of parents and

teachers to guide their children to make strong, healthy decisions in their lives — to encourage and support them regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender and to create a strong bond of trust, communication and accountability that is nurturing, caring and affirming. HB241/SB582 ignores all this and instead demands fear, subservience and repression from youth.

We as revolutionaries — whether or not we are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community — must fight back against all these oppressive, hateful bills and crush them once and for all. The struggle for LGBTQ2S+ liberation demands nothing less!

It is up to us to apply the history of yesterday’s battles to our movement today, to struggle and win tomorrow. Please “like” Florida Coalition for Trans Liberation on Facebook for more information and to learn how you can get involved. (tinyurl.com/y6xnew7z)

*Devin Cole is the president of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), a transgender advocacy organization in northwest Florida.*

## Philadelphia

### Demand for school COVID safety

Several dozen teachers, parents and community activists protested outside Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenny’s home on Feb 12. They were demanding city officials not reopen schools for in-person teaching — until all teachers are vaccinated and all schools are properly ventilated. Educators continue to teach virtually until an arbitrator rules on the safety of the school district’s plan.

—Report and photo by Joe Piette



Impeachment lessons

Everyone expected the Senate vote to acquit the ex-president, since 17 Republicans were needed to vote to convict along with 50 Democrats. Only seven did so. The trial opened a window on the internal conflict between the anti-Trump capitalist establishment and the pro-fascist wing of the ruling class.

The impeachment alone could expose but never crush this sleazy autocrat, who looked to the fascist scum atop the cesspool of U.S. racism to keep himself in office after he lost the election.

The impeachment trial exposed crimes based on violations of normal U.S. capitalist legality. It exposed the criminal complicity of the Republican Party and the opportunism of the individual Republican senators. All but seven refused to break completely with Trump, including some who publicly acknowledged his crimes.

Above all, the trial exposed the limitations of the Democratic Party in combating the real threat from racist and fascist elements. It again raised the need for an anti-fascist mobilization of the working class, independent of that party.

The main tool of the Democratic Party's impeachment managers was a 13-minute

video viewed by tens of millions of people. The video interspersed Trump's rants agitating thousands of his supporters to attack the Capitol with security video of the fascist mob's graphic violence.

The video pointed to the threat against Vice President Mike Pence — the fascists called him a "traitor" and rolled in a scaffold and a noose. Its selections singled out Republican Sen. Mitt Romney as a victim. It repeated the many vile threats against Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

Using footage from police body cameras, the video also underlined the fascist gangs' use of clubs, bear spray, flagpoles, sticks and captured police shields against those members of the police who stood between them and the Capitol. (It failed to discuss why the usual backups for these police were missing in action.)

By making the main victims — or potential victims — be rightist Republicans, establishment Democrats and police, the Democratic leadership was reaching out to the right. This was a conscious choice. The U.S. history of racist mobs shows that most of their targets by far would be any people of color within range — including

politicians of color like the women members of "the Squad."

We should make it clear that Trump is far from being the only U.S. president to incite illegal violence, even if his target was unique. Of his most recent predecessors, George W. Bush unleashed an aggressive, illegal war on Iraq that was a thousand times more violent than the attack on the Capitol. Barack Obama's administration created havoc in Syria, Libya, Yemen and Ukraine.

Trump was unique in that he brought it all home by unleashing fascist gangs from all over the country against other elected members of the capitalist government.

The assault on the Capitol was neither his first, nor even his gravest crime. Trump hurled verbal insults at Latinx immigrants as he detained and split thousands of families, including children, and killed hundreds in the desert. His slander of China has led to xenophobic attacks on Asian Americans. He appointed reactionary judges who continued the erosion of women's right to abortion.

Trump's entire administration reinforced the most reactionary aspects of 21st century U.S. imperialism: racist police

terror against all people of color; hatred of women, especially empowered women; discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ people; attacks on workers' rights and unions; bullying of people with disabilities; insulting all immigrants and cozying up to those who wave the Confederate flag and wear swastika tattoos under the political umbrella of their MAGA hats.

Instead of mobilizing those forces of society who wish to confront bigotry — including the Black Lives Matter movement, the workers organizing at Amazon and other high-tech industries, and all those who need protection from the pandemic and its economic fallout — the Democratic establishment maneuvered with the Republicans, most of whom still stuck with the Trumpists.

It will be up to working-class and anti-racist forces to find a way toward a united front that will fight the fascist movement — which will exist whether or not Trump remains its centerpiece. This united front must also be ready to confront the Democratic administration to demand relief from the pandemic and unemployment and to halt any aggressive moves abroad.

Haiti
The masses are still in the streets

By G. Dunkel

A twitter post showed hundreds of students taking to the streets of Delmas, near Port-au-Prince, on the morning of Feb. 13, some carrying pictures of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. They were demanding President Jovenel Moïse, a U.S. puppet, leave office, especially since his term was over Feb. 7. A much larger march calling on Moïse to respect Haiti's constitution took place in the afternoon. One sign in the later demonstration read, "The United States is the biggest enemy of Haiti."

On Feb. 14, Haitians held a militant march on the U.S. Embassy. One protester referring to the U.S. ambassador tweeted: "Sit your ass somewhere and stop interfering in our nation. Haiti is for Jean Jacques Dessalines and his children. It's not for Lincoln, Bush or Clinton." Dessalines was a leader of the Haitian Revolution of 1804. (Madame Boukman-Justice 4 Haiti, Twitter)

The huge demonstrations which were a major feature of Haitian protests before the pandemic began are not happening right now. Militant, smaller, more focused protests keep popping up to take their place. There were quite a number before Feb. 7, especially around the very effective general strikes on Feb. 1 and 2. Targets included the U.S. Embassy, the presidential palace and U.N. offices. And a number involved strenuous interactions with the cops.

These protests didn't stop when Moïse — after receiving full support from the U.S. — refused to leave office Feb. 7. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported 900 people — including many young children — to Haiti on Feb. 11.

A constitutional crisis

There is a raging constitutional crisis going on in Haiti in the midst of a raging pandemic.

On Feb. 7, Moïse had a judge and a commanding officer in Haiti's national police force arrested on charges of plotting to stage a coup and kill him. On Feb. 8, the opposition declared Joseph Mécène Jean-Louis — a judge on Haiti's



At a protest against the current government of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, a U.S. puppet, a demonstrator holds a sign: "Moleghaf says arrest Moïse." Moleghaf is the Mouvement de Liberté, d'Égalité des Haïtiens pour la Fraternité (Movement of Freedom, Equality of Haitians for Fraternity).

highest court, La Cour de la cassation — Haiti's interim president.

So far this declaration has received no international recognition. Even under Biden, the U.S. has firmly supported Moïse's claim for another year in office. Haitians in the justice system, from judges to lawyers to court officials, have tweeted that they are on strike and won't be handling any cases — civil or criminal — until Moïse is gone.

Beyond the conflict in the streets, which is overtly political, there have been a number of large-scale, so-called "gang" attacks on communities where opposition to Moïse is high. These "gangs" are well-armed and well-financed, and their public leaders are often ex-cops. There is a long-standing tradition of extralegal organizations in Haiti, such as the infamous Tonton Macoutes that support right-wing governments.

Mass hunger

The words used by the U.N. and the U.S. Agency for International Development are a little antiseptic. They talk about "food insecurity," when they really should be talking about hunger.

An anecdote reported by CNN at the end of December 2020 shows the impact of hunger on Haiti. Rob Freishtat is the

head of emergency medicine at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., and has volunteered at the hospital in Milot since the earthquake 10 years ago. In a single week in December 2020, eight of his patients, all under two years old, died from hunger — more than he's seen in 10 years.

Because food "donations" from the U.S. over the years have destroyed local

markets for food, much of the food consumed in Haiti is imported. The decline of the gourde (Haiti's currency) against the U.S. dollar has meant a sharp rise in food prices. Most people in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day, so they have trouble paying more for food.

**Support from U.S. progressives**

The Black Alliance for Peace, along with Popular Resistance, quickly called a Zoom meeting Feb. 11 with a number of progressive groups including Vets for Peace, Fanm Ayisyen (Haitian Women of South Florida), Workers World Party and Haïti-Liberté to work on plans for joint actions, including coordinated demonstrations and a press conference.

The Black Alliance for Peace issued a statement Feb. 12, which concludes: "[W]e understand our commitment to peace and People(s)-Centered Human Rights, social justice, democracy and self-determination cannot be realized without an organized people who are struggling for power.

"The people of Haiti are fighting for power, for the ability to determine their own destiny. Stand with them. Stand with us. Fight for freedom and for a new reality in Haiti and the world. No Compromise, No Retreat!"

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# What has Biden done so far?

## Round one in fight for immigration change

By Teresa Gutierrez

Duke University student Anthony Salgado said it best in an editorial for his school paper: “We need immigration revolution, not immigration reform.” (tinyurl.com/y695qdw9)

Unfortunately, the Democratic Party establishment is not able to grasp this concept.

But immigrants have had enough of false promises.

The immigrant/migrant/refugee population is hopeful about the election of President Joe Biden, primarily because it follows the exit of arch anti-immigrant Donald Trump. Their hopes have been fueled by progressive stands and edicts that Biden issued before taking office.

But more and more workers are understanding and demanding that enough is enough. Genuine full rights and privileges to be in this country are long overdue. Legalization has been earned a hundred times over.

### What has Biden done so far?

The tangled web that is immigration policy in the U.S. is not easy to reform. It is meant to be cumbersome and bureaucratic.

On Jan. 20 according to Reuters, Biden signed “a half a dozen executive orders to reverse several hard-line immigration policies put in place by ... Donald Trump, although migration experts warn that it will take months or longer to unravel many of the restrictions imposed in the past four years.” (tinyurl.com/1frsu3tu)

One of those orders is an attempt to end the “Remain in Mexico” policy — also known as the Migrant Protection Protocols. This onerous Trump edict cruelly sent most asylum seekers back to Mexico instead of letting people wait in this country. Under dire conditions, many living in tent cities, migrants and refugees had to wait in Mexico for their asylum hearings in U.S. courts.

According to the Texas Tribune, more than 70,000 people had been enrolled in the program. (Texas Tribune, Feb. 4) But even though Biden took these initial steps, over 20,000 asylum-seeking families are still stranded across the border.

This statelessness leaves these workers vulnerable to all kinds of abuses, including human trafficking and rape. Migrant organizations in Mexico and Central America face an overload of work, with fewer and fewer resources for the tens of

*Genuine full rights and privileges to be in this country are long overdue. Legalization has been earned a hundred times over.*



A caravan of thousands of migrants headed from Honduras to the U.S. southern border clashed with Guatemalan authorities in late January.

thousands who are roaming the Americas in search of security.

Biden called for a moratorium on deportations, yet hundreds are still being deported. Immigrants from Jamaica, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras have been sent back despite this moratorium.

In an example of how the Trump legacy still has a hold, a U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Texas granted a temporary restraining order to stop the Biden order. Worse yet, the Justice Department has not fought to block this inhumane order. (AP, Feb. 1)

### Children placed with human traffickers

The National Law Review reports President Biden signed three other executive orders on immigration Feb. 2. These include: “creating a task force that will seek to reunite families separated during the previous administration ...” And the duties “include working to find parents and children who were separated at the border.”

However, this could be like the fox guarding the hen house.

It should be remembered that the New York Times reported Jan. 28, 2016, that the “Department of Health and Human Services placed more than a dozen immigrant children in the custody of human traffickers, after it failed to conduct background checks of caregivers.”

On Sept 3, 2020, CNN reported: “Hundreds of migrant children have been held in hotels and guarded by government contractors ... as part of a secretive new system that advocates warn puts kids in danger. Immigrant and civil rights groups accuse the government of using the pandemic to create a shadow immigration system that skirts the law, with authorities denying vulnerable children protections they’re entitled to and rushing to

kick them out of the country.

“These children are being held at what are essentially black sites, with no access to the outside world ...” said Karla Marisol Vargas, a senior attorney at the Texas Civil Rights Project.”

It is difficult to imagine therefore how a mere Biden task force can resolve this shocking problem.

### Role of U.S. imperialism

The second order “addresses implementing a plan for safe and lawful migration,” calling “for the study ... of the underlying issues that currently drive migrants from their homes, particularly ... from Central America.”

This order can be problematic, leading to further delays. Perhaps lawmakers should look out the window. A weather report is not needed if you can see the rain pouring down. No study is necessary to know why workers are leaving their homelands. These issues are widely documented, and the primary reason is U.S. imperialism.

In 2009, the Obama administration, with Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, supported and orchestrated a right-wing coup in Honduras. This further helped multinational corporations drain the economies and lands of these fertile countries. The people impacted by Obama/Clinton policy are now in tents in Matamoros, Mexico, waiting for rightly deserved asylum.

A hurricane devastated Honduras in November 2020 and forced workers out of their already impoverished situation. It led to another caravan of 7,000 people to the U.S. on foot and during a pandemic.

The Biden administration is talking about throwing more money to these corrupt governments, which will not help the masses at all.

### More delay and stall

The third and final executive order demands a “top-to-bottom review” of current immigration policies. It instructs agencies to review the “public charge”

rule — “which permits the U.S. government to deny admission to an immigrant if it believes that individual is likely to accept certain public benefits.” The order further directs agencies to conduct “thorough reviews of recent regulations, policies and guidance that have created barriers to legal immigration in the United States.”

This sounds like a weighty bureaucratic exercise to delay and stall.

Undocumented workers have lived in the shadows long enough — they have paid taxes, contributed to the economy and their communities. DACA students have boldly stated they will not be pitted against their parents, neighbors or relatives. They do not want to be treated as some migrant elite; they want legalization for themselves and their community. This is a huge sign of solidarity and unity.

The pandemic proved to the entire country — and especially to the bosses and the ruling class — that undocumented and immigrant workers are essential. They deserve legalization now.

Muzaffar Chishti, a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, stated, “This is the boldest immigration agenda any administration has put forward in generations,” (LA Times, Jan. 27)

But is it? Can the Biden administration really stand up to the arch reactionary Republicans, corporate vultures, bureaucratic entanglements and ICE agents who think and act like racist police? Can it stand up to the white supremacists who fear the turn of the tide when workers of color become the majority?

The Biden administration has already had its initiative of a 100-day freeze on deportations temporarily blocked.

So who really has the power to win full legalization, human and worker rights for migrant, refugees and the undocumented? Who has the political will to dismantle policies and institutions that deny rights to the people? Who will listen to Anthony Salgado?

Time will tell. But it’s now or never, Joe. □

## GM 1937, Amazon 2021: ¿De qué lado estás?

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plantas, así como del comercio minorista, la hostelería y el sector público. Tras la victoria de los trabajadores de Flint, los sindicatos del CIO crecieron exponencialmente, incorporando al movimiento obrero a trabajadores industriales que la conservadora Federación Americana del Trabajo, basada en la artesanía, había descartado.

Entre los trabajadores que no eran bienvenidos en la AFL estaban los obreros negros del acero de Bessemer. Fue necesario el sindicato Mine, Mill and Smelter, dirigido por el Partido Comunista, para

organizar las fábricas del sur profundo. Los trabajadores negros de la siderurgia del sur fueron una parte importante de la historia laboral en los años 30. Incluso hoy la conciencia sindical es alta en Bessemer.

Amazon ha lanzado un sitio web de propaganda, “Hazlo sin cuotas”, destinado a conseguir que los trabajadores de Bessemer voten en contra de la representación sindical. Hay miedo e intimidación; el voto mayoritario no está garantizado.

Una vez ganada la representación sindical, la batalla no ha hecho más que empeorar. Luego viene la lucha por conseguir un contrato decente. Podría ser necesaria una huelga, y los partidarios del sindicato

podrían ser despedidos. Amazon podría amenazar con cerrar el almacén, como ha hecho Walmart cuando se organizaron las tiendas.

La campaña para organizar a Amazon es comparable en importancia a la obtención del primer contrato sindical de GM en 1937. Tácticamente hay diferencias entre una elección con voto secreto y una huelga, ya sea un piquete exterior o una ocupación. Pero la esencia de clase es la misma: el trabajo contra el capital.

Por lo tanto, la lucha plantea la pregunta de la famosa canción sindical: ¿De qué lado estás?

Lo que más se necesita es una

solidaridad masiva y global. Ninguno de nosotros está muy lejos de un almacén de Amazon o de una tienda de Whole Foods donde podamos poner un piquete de solidaridad.

Lo que está en juego en la batalla actual no podría ser mayor - con ramificaciones para los trabajadores de Amazon en todas partes y, en última instancia, para la clase obrera mundial. Los trabajadores de la BHM1 de Amazon necesitan saber que la clase obrera internacional les respalda. Eso inclinará la balanza y les ayudará a ganar contra el cibermillonario más rico de la historia de la humanidad. □





San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2 de junio, 2020.

## GM 1937, Amazon 2021: ¿De qué lado estás?

Por Martha Grevatt

Bessemer, Alabama, situada en las afueras de Birmingham y con una población de 26.500 habitantes -alrededor de un 75% de afroamericanos- se ha convertido en un foco central de toda la lucha de clases.

Allí, en el almacén BHM1 de Amazon, miles de trabajadores luchan por un sindicato. A pesar de las estridentes objeciones de Amazon, la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales está llevando a cabo una elección de representación sindical por correo. Desde el 8 de febrero hasta el 29 de marzo, los trabajadores enviarán por correo las papeletas indicando si quieren ser representados por el Sindicato de Trabajadores de Minoristas, Mayoristas y Grandes Almacenes, afiliado a United Food and Commercial Workers.

Esta fuerza laboral de mayoría afroamericana no sólo se enfrenta al hombre más rico del mundo, el director general de Amazon, Jeff Bezos, sino también a la segunda empresa más grande de Estados Unidos, y la novena del mundo. Amazon, incluida Whole Foods, propiedad de Amazon, tiene 1,37 millones de trabajadores sólo en Estados Unidos. Esta cifra no incluye a los repartidores. Amazon tiene la mayor capitalización bursátil -basada en el valor de las acciones y el número de acciones en circulación- de todas las empresas del mundo.

Amazon se jacta en su sitio web de que sus trabajadores ganan 15 dólares por hora -una reciente concesión al movimiento masivo de trabajadores de bajos salarios, Fight for \$15- y tienen beneficios de salud. Bessemer tiene una tasa de pobreza del 25%, y el 19% de los residentes no tienen seguro médico. Alabama es uno de los 21 estados que todavía tienen un salario mínimo igual o inferior

al mínimo federal de 7,25 dólares la hora.

Teniendo en cuenta esto, conseguir un trabajo en Amazon podría parecer un golpe de suerte. Pero el salario no es suficiente para mantener a una familia en 2021. Además, 15 dólares por hora ni



Solidaridad con la huelga de brazos caídos de Flint dentro de las plantas de GM.

siquiera se acercan al valor que los trabajadores de Amazon producen para el CEO Bezos, cuya riqueza se expande a un ritmo actual de ¡\$2.537 dólares por segundo!

Las condiciones de trabajo, descritas como “agotadoras”, son insostenibles. Se utilizan cámaras y software espía desarrollados por la propia Amazon para controlar la productividad de los trabajadores, las pausas para ir al baño y cualquier tipo de “datos relacionados con el movimiento humano, la ubicación y el entorno”, según presume la empresa. Se vigila a los empleados para que defiendan a los sindicatos.

Amazon — que comercializa su dispositivo de monitorización, el Modjoul SmartBelt a otras empresas- afirma que está diseñado “para que puedas priorizar las áreas de atención para la seguridad y la productividad”.

Esto es una rotunda mentira. “En 2019, Amazon registró 14.000 lesiones graves en todos sus centros de cumplimiento, lo que equivale a una tasa de lesiones de 7,7 lesiones graves por cada 100 empleados, encontró Reveal. Eso es casi el doble del estándar más reciente de la industria, según Reveal. Amazon también puede estar subregistrando las lesiones de los trabajadores del almacén”. (cnbc, 29 de septiembre de 2020)

Ahora, menos de un año después de que el almacén de Bessemer abriera sus puertas el pasado mes de marzo, al menos 2.000 trabajadores de Amazon han

firmado tarjetas sindicales, suficientes para que la NLRB ordene unas elecciones.

### General Motors 1937, Amazon 2021

Existen paralelismos históricos entre la lucha actual y un período anterior de feroces batallas de clase: la década de 1930. La mayor empresa del mundo era entonces General Motors, cuyo presidente, Alfred P. Sloan, era el ejecutivo mejor pagado del mundo. Los trabajadores eran vigilados por la elaborada red de espías de la empresa GM. Los partidarios del United Automobile Workers escondían sus botones sindicales bajo el cuello de la camisa.

Las condiciones en las líneas de montaje de GM no eran tan diferentes de las de Amazon. Uno de los principales problemas que motivaban la lucha por la representación de la UAW era el famoso “speedup”, cuando la dirección hacía correr más rápido el montaje en movimiento para aumentar la producción. Las empresas ricas estaban unidas en su oposición a los sindicatos. Contrataron a matones mercenarios de la famosa organización antisindical Pinkerton.

Los organizadores del recién creado Congreso de Organizaciones Industriales reconocieron la clave del éxito futuro: Una victoria en GM tendría un efecto domino, inspirando exitosas campañas sindicales en una serie de industrias. Pero no sería fácil conseguir que GM hiciera lo que juró que nunca haría: reconocer un sindicato. Fue necesaria una ocupación de 44 días de las plantas de GM en Flint, Michigan, para forzar la mano de la empresa.

El 11 de febrero se cumple el 84º aniversario de la victoria en la famosa huelga de brazos caídos de Flint. En 1937, hubo más de 500 sentadas y otras huelgas en las que participaron trabajadores de la siderurgia, la industria cárnica y otras

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## Demonizando a China

Los designados para la política del exterior de la nueva administración estadounidense no han tardado en enseñar los dientes a la China Popular. Las primeras declaraciones del Secretario de Estado Anthony Blinken aclararon que las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y China son importantes y a la vez adversas. Eso es lenguaje diplomático que significa que el imperialismo estadounidense es hostil a China, y que los éxitos chinos tienen aterrorizada a la clase dominante estadounidense.

El régimen de Joe Biden planea no dar espacio a China en los mares o en los mercados financieros. Reanudará el “pivote hacia Asia”, iniciado bajo la administración de Barack Obama, y tratará de fingir que los últimos cuatro años fueron una extraña aberración en lugar de un síntoma de la decadencia imperialista de Estados Unidos.

Mientras que el ex presidente, dos veces impugnado, y otros republicanos han calificado a Biden de “blando con China”, incluso la derechista Fox News no está

de acuerdo. El analista militar de Fox, el general retirado Jack Keane, dijo el 20 de enero que prevalece una política bipartidista contra China: “El hecho es que la gente que rodea al presidente Biden está más o menos de acuerdo con la redefinición de Trump de los retos de seguridad global a los que nos enfrentamos”.

Tras el guiño de Blinken, los medios de comunicación corporativos abrieron un bombardeo propagandístico contra China al terminar enero. Los medios de comunicación, desde el New York Times hasta NPR y Fox News, pusieron en la picota a China por (1) el manejo “autoritario” de la crisis del COVID-19, (2) la supuesta represión de las poblaciones minoritarias internas y (3) su actitud posesiva hacia Hong Kong y Taiwán.

Señalamos que estos dos últimos territorios habían formado parte de China durante milenios, antes de que las guerras y maniobras imperialistas se los arrebataran.

El artículo del columnista de opinión del Times, Nicolas Kristof, del 30 de

enero, personificó el bombardeo mediático. Kristof tiene una inmerecida reputación de “progresista”, porque escribe sobre las violaciones de los derechos humanos y especialmente de los derechos de las mujeres. El giro es que a menudo utiliza la simpatía creada por su descripción para argumentar a favor de la intervención militar de Estados Unidos -como el derrocamiento del gobierno libio por parte de Estados Unidos y la OTAN en 2011 y la continua ocupación militar de Estados Unidos en Afganistán — supuestamente para proteger los derechos de las mujeres contra los talibanes.

Kristof omite el hecho de que entre 1979 y 1991, Washington armó a todos los contrarrevolucionarios afganos reaccionarios y misóginos — incluyendo a los que asesinaron a las maestras de escuela bajo el entonces gobierno afgano pro-socialista y sus aliados soviéticos.

La columna de Kristof del 30 de enero continuó su tendencia pro-imperialista. Tuvo el descaro de llamar al líder chino Xi Jinping “un pendero demasiado confiado y arriesgado que cree que Estados Unidos está en decadencia”, e insistió en que “Biden tiene que gestionar a Xi

y reducir el riesgo de guerra sin temor”. Instó a los estrategas estadounidenses a aprovechar las supuestas diferencias dentro de la dirección del Partido Comunista Chino.

Kristof acertó en una cosa: El imperialismo estadounidense está en declive. Y el único ámbito en el que Estados Unidos sigue siendo el número uno es la producción de matones demasiado confiados y arriesgados, como demostraron el último presidente y el reciente ataque al Capitolio. Ese ataque mostró al mundo qué clase dirigente y sus representantes políticos tienen las diferencias más agudas e irracionales.

Los medios corporativos pueden confiar en que los designados por Biden llevarán a cabo una estrategia antichina coherente. Workers World/Mundo Obrero espera una política agresiva y peligrosa de Biden.

Hacemos un llamamiento a la población estadounidense para que se enfrente a las mentiras de la clase dominante estadounidense, sus políticos y sus medios de comunicación, y se movilice para impedir cualquier medida agresiva del imperialismo estadounidense contra la China Popular. □

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